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STATUS OF THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Written statement submitted by the World Association for the School as an Instrument of Peace, a non-governmental organization on the roster

The Secretary-General has received the following communication which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[4 March 1991]

1. The World Association for the School as an Instrument of Peace has, for the past 23 years, been actively promoting the rights of the child in schools by making teachers, schoolchildren, parents, young people, ministers of education, non-governmental organizations and public opinion in general aware of the need for teaching the rights of the child.

2. With a view to the application of article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the World Association has fostered North/South school correspondence in order to promote solidarity between schoolchildren throughout the world and to strengthen their right to education on the basis of the rights of the child. Over 40,000 notebooks as well as school supplies have been sent to Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Guinea, Haiti, Senegal and Togo. This inter-school correspondence has resulted in twinning between schools in the industrialized countries and schools in the third world. Its pedagogical objectives are as follows:

(a) To enable young persons of different cultures to get to know and respect one another; to arouse in the school children concerned an interest in their culture and in the positive traditional values of their country; to secure their civic and humanitarian commitment through a better knowledge of their country, its problems and achievements;

(b) To arouse a desire for collaboration between teachers of individual schools on topics concerning the rights of the child.

3. It is also important to teach the rights of the child not only to children as provided for by the Convention, but also to adults, for it is on them that the right of children to survival and to life depends.

4. As regards the obligations of educators, they should - according to article 29 of the Convention - inculcate in the child "respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms". It is therefore vital that States should ratify this Convention and also provide their ministries of education with the resources enabling them to offer their inspectors, headmasters, persons responsible for the preparation of textbooks, and above all their teachers, with training in teaching the rights of the child.

5. It may be mentioned in passing that, in 1984, the World Association for the School as an Instrument of Peace set up an International Training Centre for Teaching Human Rights and Peace (ITCTHRP), which trains the officials of national education services and the teachers of teacher-training, primary, secondary and vocational schools in teaching the rights of the child in the framework of its international, regional and national sessions devoted to the teaching of human rights, women's rights and the rights of the child. For example, ITCTHRP, in co-operation with the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and on the initiative of the Portuguese Government will, in April 1991, participate in the organization at Lisbon of the first Portuguese-speaking session on training in teaching human rights, women's rights and the rights of the child for officials from the ministries of education of Angola, Brasil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal and Sao Tome and Principe. ITCTHRP is a non-governmental, non-political and non-denominational foundation which is at the disposal of any Government wishing to organize specialized training sessions.

6. We propose that:

(a) Ministries of education should provide national education services with the means to instruct schoolchildren and teachers in the rights of the child;

(b) Ministries of education should enable their teachers to acquire training in the international aspects of teaching the rights of the child by facilitating and encouraging their participation in ITCTHRP's international and regional sessions, which would allow them to exchange experiences with the teachers of other countries and to benefit from the experience of international experts; and

(c) On the basis of a proposal by the World Association, adopted by the International Congress of Malta organized by UNESCO on human rights teaching in 1987, the Commission on Human Rights should propose that ECOSOC should request the General Assembly that in 1998 - the year of the fortieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 26 of which states that "Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms" - States Members of the United Nations should make special efforts, with the support of competent intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations such as the World Association and ITCTHRP to integrate and develop in educational systems the teaching of human rights, women's rights and the rights of the child.